REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188

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1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY)	2. REPORT TYPE	3. DATES COVERED (From - To)
14-02-2005	FINAL	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE		5a. CONTRACT NUMBER
Bridging the Gap: The Milit	cary Role in Stabilization and	
		5b. GRANT NUMBER
Reconstruction Operations		
		5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER
6. AUTHOR(S)	5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
Toronh W Dolton I CDD HON	5e. TASK NUMBER	
Joseph W. Dalton, LCDR, USN		
D All CADEGA IZ	LICAL	5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER
Paper Advisor: CAPT Steven Kornatz	z, USN	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)		8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT
· ,	,	NUMBER
Joint Military Operations Departm		
Naval War College		
686 Cushing Road		
Newport, RI 02841-1207		
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NA	ME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)	10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)
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		11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT
		NUMBER(S)
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12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Distribution Statement A: Approved for public release; Distribution is unlimited.

13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES A paper submitted to the faculty of the NWC in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the JMO Department. The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the NWC or the Department of the Navy.

14. ABSTRACT

The United States military has been historically dominant and successful on the battlefield. Translating this success through the post-conflict phase and achievement of the strategic end state has proven much more nebulous and difficult. The military does have a critical role to play in this transitional phase to facilitate successful transfer of control to appropriate civilian authorities. The historical record suggests trends and lessons which may be incorporated by the military leadership to provide guidance in how best to organize present military forces and capabilities for success in these Stabilization and Reconstruction Operations. By accepting its critical role in the post-conflict environment, the United States military can better ensure that the victory won in the hardships of war is not lost in pursuit of the final peace.

15. SUBJECT TERMS

Stabilization and Reconstruction Operations

16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:		17. LIMITATION	18. NUMBER	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON	
		OF ABSTRACT	OF PAGES	Chairman, JMO Dept	
a. REPORT UNCLASSIFIED	b. ABSTRACT UNCLASSIFIED	c. THIS PAGE UNCLASSIFIED		22	19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (include area code) 401-841-3556

Standard Form 298 (Rev. 8-98)

NAVAL WAR COLLEGE Newport, RI

Bridging the Gap:The Military Role in Stabilization and Reconstruction Operations

By

Joseph W. Dalton LCDR USN

A paper submitted to the faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

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Abstract

Bridging the Gap: The Military Role in Stabilization and Reconstruction Operations

The United States military has been historically dominant and successful on the battlefield. Translating this success through the post-conflict phase and achievement of the strategic end state has proven much more nebulous and difficult. The military does have a critical role to play in this transitional phase to facilitate successful transfer of control to appropriate civilian authorities. The historical record suggests trends and lessons which may be incorporated by the military leadership to provide guidance in how best to organize present military forces and capabilities for success in these Stabilization and Reconstruction Operations. By accepting its critical role in the post-conflict environment, the United States military can better ensure that the victory won in the hardships of war is not lost in pursuit of the final peace.

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The U.S. military has historically enjoyed great success in major combat operations, due greatly to its professionalism and training. Indeed, victory in modern conventional combat is now declared and measured in weeks vice years. While the conflict may have ended, however the strategic end state may not have been achieved. In this transition between conflict and peace lies a significant gap which could ultimately reverse the success of military victory and result in political defeat. This transition phase between major combat operations and the transfer to civilian authority must be addressed by the U.S. military. The U.S. military does have a role to play and significant capabilities to employ to immediately begin post-conflict tasks. The military neither can nor should manage the entire phase but can perform critical tasks until appropriate civilian organizations are prepared to assume responsibility. The military can bridge the gap between war and peace by facilitating the transition between the two.

To highlight the need for military participation in post-conflict operations, the phase will be defined and implied tasks developed to describe the broad themes of these operations. A history of these operations will be reviewed for trends and lessons learned and arguments for and against military involvement in this phase will then be considered. Based on this analysis, the military role in this environment will be accepted and recommendations made on how best to organize to facilitate this transitional phase.

The relevance of this analysis is provided by synthesizing historical perspectives, operational realities, and current capabilities to provide an example of how best to organize U.S. military forces for success. The recommendations herein provide the Combatant Commander with a capability to address the challenges of the post-conflict phase within

current force capabilities. Such a capability ensures that the hard fought victory in major combat is not lost in the transition to peace.

Stabilization and Reconstruction Operations Defined

Post-conflict operations have been characterized by a variety of names and terms over the last sixty years. Operations in Germany and Japan were labeled occupations; those in Somalia, Haiti, and the Balkans were peacekeeping and peace enforcement operations; and presently those in Afghanistan and Iraq are stabilization and reconstruction operations.¹ Additionally, U.S. Army doctrine denotes these operations as Stability and Support Operations.² The term Stabilization and Reconstruction Operations will be used throughout this document to synthesize these terms.

Stabilization operations are described in the Stability Operations Joint Operating Concept as:

Multiagency operations that involve all instruments of national and multinational action, including the international humanitarian and reconstruction community to support major conventional combat operations if necessary; establish security; facilitate reconciliation among local or regional adversaries; establish the political, social, and economic architecture; and facilitate the transition to legitimate local governance.

Stability operations establish a safe and secure environment; provide essential social services, emergency infrastructure reconstruction and humanitarian relief in order to facilitate the transition to legitimate, local civil governance. The objective is clearly to establish governance that enables a country or regime to provide for its own security, rule of law, social services, and economic activity and eliminate as many of the root causes of the crisis as feasible to reduce the likelihood of the reemergence of another crisis.³

The highlights of these operations are security, humanitarian assistance and relief, law and order, and governance.

Reconstruction operations focus on "providing and enhancing not only economic well-being and governance and the rule of law but also other elements of justice and reconciliation and, very centrally, security." The emphasis is on a secure environment which prevents the loss of life and not complete social and economic transformation, though in cases of regime change transformation is inherent. Stabilization and Reconstruction Operations are complementary and "intrinsically intertwined."

Tasks of Stabilization and Reconstruction

Four broad tasks of Stabilization and Reconstruction Operations can be developed from the descriptions noted above: security, law and order, civic assistance, and government. These tasks are interdependent, each critical for overall success, and should therefore be pursued simultaneously.⁶ Analyzing these elements in detail helps to conceptualize what potential role exists for U.S. military forces in these operations.

Security, a traditional role for military forces, remains at the forefront. Conceptually, security for Stabilization and Reconstruction Operations focuses on public safety from the national level to the individual level. This includes peace enforcement through the suppression and defeat of military opponents as well as their disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration. Security forces conduct operations to:

Protect cultural landmarks, hospitals, schools, religious sites, and museums. They also protect key assets such as, power facilities, hospitals, water systems, food production and distribution centers, weapons storage areas, and other high interest areas. This helps the joint force commander meet his obligations under international law; it also enhances the legitimacy of the operation in the eyes of international and local observers.⁸

Security force composition should include the capabilities to:

Conduct counterinsurgency operations, unconventional warfare, and counter-terrorist

activities as well as limited conventional operations in order to impose a level of security that can eventually be enforced by civilian police forces.⁹

These operations would be performed against remaining opposition elements, both immediately following major combat operations and as part of the overall security plan.

Law and order are clearly intertwined with security, with security providing the foundation of order. While an indigenous police or military force may exist to aid in security and the maintenance of law and order, their presence or legitimacy may not be guaranteed as is the recent case in Iraq. The military may then find itself as the sole force available to enforce law and order. Additional military police, teams of judges and lawyers, and the management of a penal system may be required. Training of the indigenous police force and restoration of the legal system will likely require a significant amount of specialized advisors and time. Legal restrictions such as the Foreign Assistance Act may require the embedding of civilian specialists (e.g. Department of Justice) to accomplish this training. Military forces can support the maintenance of law and order for a short interim period until indigenous or international agencies are capable of assuming the role.

The third major task of Stabilization and Reconstruction Operations is civic assistance. This includes the repair of critical infrastructure, provision of essential public services, and general humanitarian assistance such as food distribution. General aspects of civic assistance include:

Vital human services: hospitals, water supplies, waste and hazardous material storage and processing, emergency services (police, fire, rescue).

Civil administration: legislative, judicial, and administrative functions.

Communications and information: television, radio, telephone, Internet, newspapers, magazines, and computer systems.

Transportation and distribution: highways, railways, ports, waterways, pipelines, airports, mass transit and trucking companies.

Energy: production, storage, and distribution of electric power, oil, and natural gas.

Commerce: key industries and other business, banking, and finance.¹³

Infrastructure restoration and repair requires engineering, civil affairs, and medical expertise which can be provided by both military and civilian capabilities. The use of discretionary funds to directly employ the population is an additional method which creates jobs and goodwill while restoring essential services. Hilliary support in this environment would be focused on immediate humanitarian needs and critical infrastructure repair. Long term civic assistance would be performed by other organizations such as the United Nations and nongovernmental organizations.

The final task of Stabilization and Reconstruction Operations is governmental, with the transition from military to civilian control. This transition is a transfer of operational control to the existing indigenous government or an international organization such as the United Nations. In the case of regime change operations, the complete establishment of an effective and legitimate government through elections may be required prior to transfer of responsibility or sovereignty. The military actor is the command element which should communicate regularly with the host nation and other organizations to facilitate this transition. Responsibility can be transferred to another U.S. governmental institution such as the Department of State, the United Nations, or other international organizations. These organizations will likely be active in such operations and should be integrated into mission planning from the beginning. The handover phase historically has been difficult due to organizational differences and cultural misunderstandings; therefore an inclusive process is critical to easing the transition.¹⁵

Historical Trends and Lessons

Historical lessons were synthesized from the following documents: America's Role in Nation-Building: From Germany to Iraq; Transforming for Stabilization and Reconstruction Operations; and Reconstructing Iraq: Insights, Challenges, and Missions for Military Forces in a Post-Conflict Scenario. These documents reviewed different historical Stabilization and Reconstruction Operations including Germany, Japan, Haiti, the Balkans, Afghanistan and Iraq. The focus of these lessons learned will be on controllable factors which can be accounted for and incorporated into future Stabilization and Reconstruction planning and operations.

A review of Stabilization and Reconstruction Operations from post-World War II to the present reveals three significant trends in periodicity, length, and cost. The United States averaged one major operation every ten years during the Cold War. This interval increased to one operation every two years in the decade following the end of the Cold War and, with current operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, this periodicity has been reduced to eighteen months. This trend suggests Stabilization and Reconstruction Operations will be both likely and frequent occurrences in the future. The typical length of a Stabilization and Reconstruction operation is between five and eight years, while initial estimates are generally optimistic and inaccurate. Success is not necessarily guaranteed by time, however, and other measures of effectiveness should be developed as well. This intersection of frequency and length suggests a critical overlap in the number of operations and assets to conduct them. This intersection also suggests the need for endurance and sustainability of multiple U.S. agencies, coalition partners, and international organizations to conduct such long term operations.

The cost of these operations is impressive: from FY91-FY04, the U.S. spent roughly \$150 billion on Stabilization and Reconstruction Operations compared to roughly \$50 billion for major combat operations. A strong correlation exists between resources (e.g. time, money, manpower) committed and success as well, although success is not guaranteed. Future Stabilization and Reconstruction Operations will therefore be frequent, lengthy, and expensive for the United States. Synthesizing lessons learned from these past operations is critical to successfully manage these trends in the future.

Planning is just as critical for Stabilization and Reconstruction Operations as for major combat. The successful occupation of Germany was planned two years in advance while planning for post-conflict operations in Panama was virtually non-existent and resulted in initial failure.²¹ Planning should also account for early integration of Stabilization and Reconstruction Operations. Operations in Germany, where U.S. civil affairs elements commenced operations just four days after the initial Allied entry, suggest these operations should be nearly simultaneous and must begin before the end of major combat operations.²²

Planning for Stabilization and Reconstruction Operations should also be conducted concurrently with planning for major combat operations to create an integrated and synergistic approach for success.²³ This concurrent planning ensures the presence of a plan and coordination between staffs facilitates the transition phase. Embedded civilian specialists in the staff and force also aid in planning and coordination, particularly for "civil security and administration, restoring essential services and other reconstruction needs, and facilitating the transition to the civilian authority."²⁴ The interdependence of these operations requires a coordinated membership and process. These in turn promote trust and confidence

among participants by clearly establishing responsibilities and synchronizing operations to create unity of effort.

An additional planning factor to consider is that "a rapid and decisive conventional military victory does not guarantee a peaceful post-conflict stabilization environment and indeed could make the S&R [Stabilization and Reconstruction] mission more challenging."²⁵ The smaller numerical size and focused war fighting capabilities of modern forces compared to those of the past may limit the ability of modern forces to perform these missions.²⁶ The rapidity of transitioning from violent conflict to Stabilization and Reconstruction Operations also challenges the force by limiting time to plan and prepare. While major combat operations in World War II lasted for several years, contemporary campaigns can end in weeks. Proper planning is therefore critical to reconcile these capability gaps early to quickly sequence Stabilization and Reconstruction activities into the wake of major combat operations.

Additionally, a secure environment is a precondition for successful operations and its establishment is the primary military mission.²⁷ This does not suggest that Stabilization and Reconstruction Operations cannot be conducted until a completely safe and secure environment is established. A degree of risk and uncertainty is required to operate nearly simultaneously with combat operations. Military Stabilization and Reconstruction forces can conduct operations in this environment and handover responsibilities to civilian agencies as the environment becomes permissive.

This secure environment also encompasses the rule of law and requires a trained police force, an operable judicial and penal system, and the ability to combat organized crime. Military police in Panama and the Balkans were not suited for these environments

where combat still existed and their use revealed a need for a separate security force.²⁸ The ability to maintain law and order in the Balkans was also hampered by a lack of judicial infrastructure, requiring the establishment and manning of detention facilities and formation of legal teams to provide lawyers and judges.²⁹ The number of personnel engaged in the operation also provides a measure of security. A greater number of casualties were noted in operations involving low numbers of U.S. troops, suggesting an inverse relationship between force levels and risk.³⁰

Multilateral operations continue to be a critical element in the Stabilization and Reconstruction plan. Multilateral operations, though complex and lacking a guarantee of success, provide legitimacy and burden sharing among partners. These operations may also prove more transformational and less costly. Challenges for these operations exist and must be overcome for success. A shared vision to integrate other national and international organizations is required to ensure unity of effort. Communications and information systems compatibility must be addressed as well to create a collaborative environment and maintain an atmosphere of trust and coordination among participants.

History reveals the difficulties in the transition from major combat operations to the post-hostilities phase and the conduct of Stabilization and Reconstruction Operations. The increasing frequency, length of commitment, and significant cost require that these historical lessons be learned, addressed and incorporated for future operations. The difficulties, however, may be rooted outside of the controllable factors addressed previously. Noted in one study, "the primary problem at the core of American deficiencies in post-conflict capabilities, resources, and commitment is a national aversion to nation-building, which was

strengthened by failure in Vietnam."³⁴ The military must address this aversion to be successful in operations that it will no doubt conduct in the future.

This rejection of Stabilization and Reconstruction operations has roots both in the military and the civilian sectors. For the military, skill sets and operational approaches for waging war and Stabilization and Reconstruction Operations are different and difficult to reconcile. The military, simply put, exists to win wars and not participate in the aftermath. Additionally, dedicating troops and assets to these missions diverts funding and resources and may result in a substandard war fighting force. The strains of unpredictable Stability and Reconstruction deployments would also negatively affect maintenance, repair, training and morale. Additionally, the military is organized, trained and equipped for major combat operations, not Stabilization and Reconstruction Operations.

Civilian agencies, such as the Department of State, believe that the military should play the primary role in establishing and maintaining security but would limit its expansion beyond security into traditional nation building operations. Military participation in these operations is complicated by suspicion of the military role and presence, its different organizational culture and structure, and conflicts between the use of force and the need for restraint. Agencies also feel that improving communication, coordination, and sustainability of their respective agencies is more likely to achieve long-term success. Others believe that civilian agencies such as non-governmental and international organizations, the private sector, and other government entities are better suited for these operations. These organizations bring specialization and legitimacy to address the wide range of post-conflict reconstruction issues. Additionally, military involvement in conducting these operations can blur the distinction between military and non-governmental and international

organizations.³⁸ This distinction is critical for the perceived neutrality that these organizations enjoy and therefore the safety that a neutral status provides. Though the military is the only organization which can impose the initial security required, the presence of such forces and conduct of operations outside the security realm could be detrimental.

While these arguments against using military forces are valid in some cases, the reality simply is that the military is typically the only organization able to perform such tasks immediately in a post-conflict situation or hostile environment.³⁹ The unique capabilities, sheer number of personnel and volume of equipment, and ability to deploy on short notice with minimal preparation make the military the primary choice by default. The immediate nature, significant length of operations and unpredictable need for expertise also make initial reliance on civilian contractors an expensive and unlikely option. Contractors will surely be needed for multiple and long-term reconstruction tasks but the military can and does fill the immediate void.⁴⁰ Though not designed for performing the full array of Stabilization and Reconstruction tasks, the military can provide the immediate need for security, law and order, and civic and humanitarian assistance until civilian organizations are prepared to assume responsibility. The historical record and the frequency of past military intervention suggest that the military does indeed have a long history of conducting such operations, regardless of its cultural anathema for Stabilization and Reconstruction.

Until the U.S. creates an organization or capability which can accomplish these tasks in place of military forces, the military will continue to be called upon. This realization is becoming more apparent within the military as well. According to General Zinni, the U.S. must assign Stabilization and Reconstruction tasks to the military or create an entity to perform them alongside the military.⁴¹ Indeed, the Department of Defense is considering the

creation of a dedicated force for Stabilization and Reconstruction Operations. This force "would include such elements as combat arms, military police, civil affairs, military intelligence, psychological affairs, engineers, and explosive ordnance teams." Based on the historical record of military participation in these operations and its current, yet reluctant, acceptance of this critical mission, the military should begin consideration of how best to employ its resources to conduct the Stabilization and Reconstruction mission. Military forces should not be used in isolation to conduct the full range of Stabilization and Reconstruction operations but to immediately fill the vacuum created during the end of major combat operations and facilitate the transition to civilian organizations.

A Concept for Stabilization and Reconstruction Forces

Military forces for Stabilization and Reconstruction Operations will typically be drawn from existing units in theater, particularly security forces and logistical support. Specialized units such as engineers and civil affairs, if required, should be selected and tailored for the particulars of the operating environment. Both organizational attributes and structure should be considered in tailoring these forces to the appropriate mission.

Organizational attributes of military forces conducting these operations should include jointness, scalability, flexibility, and modularity. The forces must be expeditionary in nature and possess the critical ability to integrate with other governmental, non-governmental, and international organizations as well as multinational forces. They should possess "sufficient mobility, survivability and sustainability to immediately follow and support combat forces." The forces must also possess a strong intelligence capability which focuses on non-traditional subjects such as cultural intelligence, information sharing

with partners, and new information categories such as political parties, international and non-governmental organizations. Both the organization and personnel strongly need to show transparency in communicating with all actors to foster legitimacy for the mission.

Transparency can be gained by clearly defining intentions, procedures, and capabilities to develop trust and avoid suspicion. Personnel attributes should also include restraint, language and regional expertise, and an ability to establish personal contacts and build relationships. 46

The design for organizing a Stabilization and Reconstruction force should be modeled on the U.S. Marine Corps Special Purpose Marine Air-Ground Task Force (SPMAGTF) because of its scalability and tailorability to specific missions. The four basic organizational elements of the SPMAGTF (Command Element, Ground Combat Element, Air Combat Element, and Combat Service Support Element) can be modified and transposed into a Stabilization and Reconstruction force. The Command Element remains, however a Security Element, Civic Assistance Element and Support Element would be incorporated to replace the functional elements of the SPMAGTF. These functional elements are also consistent with the recent Stability Operations Joint Operating Concept. The Command Element would be formed within the Combatant Commander (CCDR) staff while the remaining elements would be drawn from existing forces and assets in theater or requested based on mission requirements.

The Command Element is the most critical component in the Stabilization and Reconstruction force because of its permanence and inherent characteristics. This element should be placed in the CCDR staff and focus on the assigned area of operations to build geographical and cultural expertise. The element also generates training requirements for

forces the CCDR may possess or forwards training and equipment recommendations to Joint Forces Command or the Service chiefs to incorporate. This element is essentially a Standing Joint Force Headquarters (SJFHQ) but focused on Stabilization and Reconstruction Operations only. Incorporation within the CCDR staff allows the Command Element to work in parallel with the SJFHQ on a crisis and facilitates the transition between staffs. The process is similar to the method used by Spruance and Halsey in the Pacific during World War II.

The Command Element is also critical because herein lies the bulk of the interagency coordination process for conducting Stabilization and Reconstruction Operations. The functions of a Civil-Military Operations Center are essentially incorporated into the Command Element to facilitate operational planning and coordination of the transition phase, from major combat to Stabilization and Reconstruction and the eventual handover to civilian authority. Personnel with experience in the major categories of security, civic assistance, and support should be incorporated to aid in planning and organization. Military staff members must become well versed in the responsibilities and capabilities of the variety of organizations involved. Representatives from the Departments of State and Justice, the U.S. Agency for International Development and others as well as civilians with expertise in legal, engineering, and humanitarian assistance matters should also be embedded in the staff. This group would produce a portfolio of capabilities and contacts within host nations and from the variety of non-governmental, international, and private organizations currently operating in the area. This not only speeds the incorporation of local actors into operations but also the transition process by building trust and relationships early on.

The element also has the critical task of coordinating with traditional staff elements to ensure synchronization of operations, including the targeting process, to protect required facilities and infrastructure and build awareness of what will require repair. A robust intelligence capability to gather and share cultural intelligence is an additional critical capability for both the security and humanitarian components of the mission and should be incorporated into the Command Element as well. This capability also aids in information sharing within the civil-military structure of the Command Element.

The Security Element will typically be drawn from existing forces in theater, particularly following major combat operations, with size and composition determined by the commander and tailored for the mission. The major change for security forces is the need for restraint in the use of violence. Rules of Engagement will likely change and must be understood to prevent small incidents from damaging the goodwill garnered by the overall operation.

The Civic Assistance Element is the primary element for conducting the full range of Stabilization and Reconstruction Operations beyond major security. The focus of this element is on meeting immediate humanitarian needs, performing critical infrastructure repair and establishing basic law and order. These forces can perform these functions in marginally secure conditions until security improves and other organizations are capable of assuming responsibility. The organization should include Civil Affairs and administration personnel; Military Police; legal teams of lawyers and judges; engineers; medical service personnel; and Psychological Operations personnel. Doctrinally many of these units are traditionally assigned as support to a larger unit, however in this environment they would operate independently to support the overall Stabilization and Reconstruction mission.⁴⁸

These units could again be present in the theater or brought in based on specialization. Other government agency personnel should be embedded within these sub-elements as well to augment expertise and aid in the transition process.

The Support Element consists of traditional Combat Service Support elements which would already exist in theater and could be augmented as required. This element provides supply, maintenance, transportation and services to support the Stabilization and Reconstruction mission. While sustainability of the operational forces is the primary mission, efforts must be made to integrate and synchronize efforts of other agencies as well to create unity of effort. The Support Element is therefore critical not only as a supporting mechanism but by strengthening the interagency relationships which have been built throughout the planning and operational phases.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The U.S. military will likely enjoy victory on the battlefield in the future.

Consolidating these victories and achieving strategic goals, however, will continue to be difficult. The military will find itself engaged in operations more frequently and for long periods of time in the future if the current trend continues. To ensure success in achieving strategic goals and the elusive end state, the military must continue operations beyond major combat and support the Stabilization and Reconstruction phase. The military cannot and should not solely perform the entire Stabilization and Reconstruction mission. The military, by presence alone following combat operations, will likely be the only organization capable of supporting humanitarian needs and reconstruction efforts in the immediate aftermath.

These functions can and must be continued until the host nation government or international agencies assume responsibility.

The military can contribute to the successful transition between phases through thoughtful organization by matching current force structures and capabilities with the specific tasks of Stabilization and Reconstruction. Creating a task oriented force consisting of the Command, Security, Civic Assistance and Support elements addresses the tasks of Stabilization and Reconstruction Operations and facilitates the transfer of authority to civilian control. This organization incorporates the lessons of the past and provides the Combatant Commander with a capability to manage the challenges of the post-conflict phase both in the present and in the future. By bridging the gap between combat and the return to normalcy, this capability ensures that the hard fought victory in war is not lost in the transition to peace.

NOTES

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⁴⁵ Ibid, 40.

⁴⁶ Anthony H Cordesman, "Nation Building in Iraq: A Status Report," (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 25 March 2004), 5.

⁴⁷ JOC 1.07, 22. Another conceptual framework for organization such a force is the permanent establishment of two complete Stabilization and Reconstruction Joint Commands, one Active and one Reserve. The framework possesses a command element and four Joint Stabilization and Reconstruction Groups containing military police, civil affairs, engineer, medical and psychological operations elements. This model incorporates support and maneuver elements as required to maintain its scalability. This framework is presented in <u>Transforming for Stabilization and Reconstruction Operations</u>, 59.

⁴⁸ FM 3-07, 2- 23-4.

⁴⁹ Joint Chiefs of Staff, <u>Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms</u>, Joint Pub 1-02 (Washington, DC: 12 April 2001 (As Amended Through 9 June 2004), 98-99.

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